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effectiveness of two methods of composition
assignments in stimulating ideas.

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AN EXPERIMENTAL EVALUATION OF THE RELATIVE
EFFECTIVENESS OF TWO METHODS OF COMPOSITION
ASSIGNMENTS IN STIMULATING IDEAS

Submitted by

Martin Walter Donovan

(A.B., Northeastern University, 1945)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Education

1947

First Reader: William C. Kvaraceus, Assistant Professor of Education

Second Reader: Donald D. Durrell, Professor of Education

Third Reader: W. Linwood Chase, Professor of Education

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School of Education
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The writer wishes to acknowledge sincere appreciation to Doctor William C. Kvaraceus, Professor of Education, Boston University, for his friendly guidance in planning this study.

The writer is indebted to Mr. Roland C. Woodwell, Miss Eleanor Lee, and Miss Louise Butler of the Amesbury High School English Department for their kind cooperation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to acknowledge sincere appreciation to Doctor William B. Brewster, Professor of Education, Boston University, for his friendly guidance in planning this study. The writer is indebted to Mr. Edward C. Woodwell, Miss Eleanor Lee, and Miss Louise Butler of the Westbury High School for their kind cooperation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
Index to Tables.....	iii
 Chapter I	
Statement of the Problem.....	1 - 3
 Chapter II	
Background of Problem.....	4- 13
 Chapter III	
Plan of the Experiment.....	14- 24
 Chapter IV	
Analysis of Data.....	25- 43
 Chapter V	
Summary and Conclusions.....	44- 48
 Bibliography.....	49- 50

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Index to Tables.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Foreword.....	v
Chapter I Statement of the Problem.....	1 - 4
Chapter II Background of Problem.....	4 - 13
Chapter III Plan of the Experiment.....	14 - 24
Chapter IV Analysis of Data.....	25 - 43
Chapter V Summary and Conclusions.....	44 - 48
Bibliography.....	49 - 50

INDEX TO TABLES

	Page
TABLE IA	Class I: Topic-Country---Situation-City..... 29
TABLE IB	Class II: Situation-City---Topic Country.....30
TABLE IIA	Classes III & IV: Topic City---Situation-Country.30
TABLE IIB	Classes V & VI: Situation-Country---Topic-City...31
TABLE III	Boys in Classes II, V, & VI: Situation---Topic...32
TABLE IV	Boys in Classes I, III, & IV: Topic---Situation-.33
TABLE V	Girls in Classes II, V, & VI: Situation--Topic...33
TABLE VI	Girls in Classes I, III, & IV: Topic--Situation..34
TABLE VII	Pupils of High School-Achievement: Situation--- Topic.....35
TABLE VIII	Pupils of High School-Achievement: Topic--- Situation.....36
TABLE IX	Pupils of Low School-Achievement: Situation--- Topic.....37
TABLE X	Pupils of Low School-Achievement: Topic--- Situation.....37
TABLE XI	Pupils of High English Achievement: Situation-- Topic.....38
TABLE XII	Pupils of High English Achievement; Topic--- Situation.....39
TABLE XIII	Pupils of Low English Achievement: Situation-- Topic.....40
TABLE XIV	Pupils of Low English Achievement: Topic--- Situation.....40

INDEX TO TABLES

TABLE IA	Class I: Topic-Country-Station-City.....	32
TABLE IB	Class II: Station-City-Topic-Country.....	33
TABLE ICA	Classes III & IV: Topic-City-Station-Country.....	34
TABLE IIB	Classes V & VI: Station-Country-Topic-City.....	35
TABLE IIC	Boys in Classes II, V, & VI: Station-Topic.....	36
TABLE IID	Boys in Classes I, III, & IV: Topic-Station.....	37
TABLE IIE	Girls in Classes II, V, & VI: Station-Topic.....	38
TABLE IIF	Girls in Classes I, III, & IV: Topic-Station.....	39
TABLE VII	Table of High School Achievement: Station.....	40
TABLE VIII	Table of High School Achievement: Topic.....	41
TABLE IX	Table of High School Achievement: Station.....	42
TABLE X	Table of High School Achievement: Topic.....	43
TABLE XI	Table of High School Achievement: Station.....	44
TABLE XII	Table of High School Achievement: Topic.....	45
TABLE XIII	Table of Low English Achievement: Station.....	46
TABLE XIV	Table of Low English Achievement: Topic.....	47

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CHAPTER I

THEORY OF THE PRACTICE

The following study is an effort to present a systematic and comprehensive treatment of the subject of the theory of the practice of the profession of the architect.

Some attention has been given to the history of the profession of the architect, but the main object of this study is to present a systematic and comprehensive treatment of the subject of the theory of the practice of the profession of the architect.

CHAPTER I

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CHAPTER I

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The following study is an effort to evaluate the relative effectiveness of two methods of assigning English compositions.

Two topic assignments and two situation assignments were devised and given to one hundred and seventeen pupils in the tenth grade for the purpose of ascertaining which of the two methods of assignment would produce the greater response in quantity of ideas.

The importance of reacting to real life situations in composition is obvious when one considers those many instances in life which demand a written response. Specific instances would include writing to a prospective employer, writing a speech for a club group, writing to secure the release of a prisoner, writing a critical analysis of a proposed city ordinance, and writing an article for a magazine.

One's skill in successfully meeting situations which call for writing is directly dependent upon his previous experiences which called for writing.

The hypothesis underlying this study is that life is a process of thinking one's way through an unending series of situations. It is proposed, therefore, that pupils be stimulated by means of the situation assignment to respond more in ideas to specific and challenging situations which are within the range of their real or vicarious experiences.

The situation assignment presents to the pupil facts or imaginative happenings which contain the elements of a problematical situation. The pupil has the opportunity and the obligation to analyze, criticize, and synthesize the elements of the problem. He is encouraged to seek corroboratory facts, to reconstruct, to utilize creative imagination -- to treat the situation, or problem, as one vitally important to him.

The topic assignment, usually consisting of a short title, frequently requires that pupils write compositions on such subjects as "A June Evening," "The Tattered Flag," "A Day on the Farm."

The problem was selected primarily because of a felt need for psychologically valid methods and materials of instruction, viz., those which will stimulate more interest, better study habits, more reflective thinking, and result in clear, logical presentation of ideas in written form.

Smith¹ concluded from the Regents Inquiry in 1941 that, "Instruction in the gathering, organization, and presentation of ideas with a specific end in view needs increased attention in New York State." The survey, as she indicates, probably reflects nation wide needs in these respects.

The situation assignment is designed to remedy the lack of response in ideas which has been obvious, when pupils have

¹Smith, Dora V., Evaluating Instruction in Secondary School English, National Council of Teachers of English, Monograph no. 11, Chicago, 1941, p. 248.

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 imaginative happenings which contain the elements of a problem-
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The situation assignment is designed to remedy the lack
 of response in ideas which has been obvious, when pupils have

been made to write on topics which they did not consider to be important.

Seely¹, in 1933, concluded:

"It is probably not too much to affirm that written composition has been employed more normally in other school work than it has in the English classes. Its purposes, materials, and forms, have had clearer and more naturally interrelated and motivated uses elsewhere than in the very classes supposed to clarify and give them useful meaning. The boy has undoubtedly "written up" his experiments in science, his readings in history, his excursions in the fine and industrial arts, and his language translations, with a keener eye to requirements and proprieties than that with which he has prepared his various "themes" in composition. This has occurred not because of his composition training in English, but largely in spite of it."

It is necessary, for the purposes of this study, to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the two methods of assignment in order to establish a basis for calling for compositions which will more nearly represent maximal writing performance.

¹Seely, Howard Francis, On Teaching English, American Book Company, New York, 1933, p. 243.

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CHAPTER II

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BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM

Until comparatively recently, composition assignments in secondary schools have not, as a rule, been predicated upon creative and utilitarian bases, nor had there been much conscious effort to connect composition with actual life.

It is not to be wondered that the above was true when one considers the methods in which public school teachers themselves were trained in normal schools. The results of the Meadows'¹ Survey, in 1928, furnishes proof of the divorce of composition and actual life in the teaching of future teachers.

"Probably in no way did the teaching of composition in the early history of our Normal Schools vary so much from the teaching of that subject in the present teacher's colleges as in the assignment of theme subjects. The following lists, taken somewhat at random from the early textbooks, should be sufficient proof of this statement. Practically all the subjects are abstract as opposed to the more concrete and practical subjects of today.

Submission to Teachers	Resignation under Affliction
Diversions	The Evils of Pride
Time	Politeness and Good Breeding
Modesty	A Pleasing Disposition
Flattery	History and Biography Compared
History	Novels
Dress	Contemplation
Parental Affection	Generosity
Good Manners	Politeness and Religion
A Good Character	The Art of Pleasing."
Anger	

¹Meadows, Leon Renfroe, A Study of the Teaching of English Composition in Teachers' Colleges in the United States, Columbia University Teachers College Contributions to Education, No. 311, New York, 1928, p. 12.

CHAPTER II

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Until comparatively recently, composition assignments in secondary schools have not, as a rule, been predicated upon expressive and utilitarian bases, nor had there been much conscious effort to connect composition with actual life.

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A Good Character	Divisions
Good Manners	Time
Paternal Affection	Modesty
Prose	Flattery
History	History
Contemplation	Novels
Generosity	Composition
Politeness and Religion	General
The Art of Pleasing	History and Geography Compared
	A Pleasant Disposition
	Politeness and Good Breeding
	The Evil of Pride
	Restraint under Affliction

Meadows, Leon Herbert, A Study of the Teaching of English Composition in Teachers' Colleges in the United States, Columbia University Teachers College Contribution to Education, No. 311, New York, 1928, p. 12.

Graduates from normal schools (1864-1875), when asked, "What did the teacher of composition require you to do?", were almost unanimous in adverse comment. Some typical replies concerning the merits of assigned topics were: "uninteresting", "vague", "meaningless", "on some subject that was wholly foreign to us", "dry", "insipid".¹

There does not appear to be any definite point of transition wherein one may find conscious and exclusive emphasis upon the personal, the concrete, and the useful, as opposed to the impersonal, the abstract, and the ornamental. A random examination of nineteenth century textbooks on composition will give one proof that the more utilitarian methods of composition today were not unthought of.²

"The power to wield thought to best advantage is the greatest power belonging to man. But it is absurd to suppose that the teaching of a little syntax can develop sufficient ability in regard to either language or thought. Yet in most of our schools the direct study of the English language is confined almost entirely to the study of English grammar... Surely some change is required in teaching the art of expression — even rhetoric itself. The history of a language is not the skill of using it; and a boy who is worried a year in obsolescent niceties of punctuation, or carried into the upper heaven of taste, sublimity, beauty, and general metaphysics, without seeing sun, moon, or stars, will probably derive little pleasure or benefit from his study, except what he may indirectly absorb from choice extracts."

Such statements are the exception. Gradually, there came a changed emphasis on composition "fundamentals" which

¹Ibid, pp. 7-8.

²Kerl, Simon, Elements of Composition and Rhetoric, Ivison, Phinney, New York, 1869, p. 22.

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There does not appear to be any definite point of transition wherein one may find concrete and exclusive emphasis upon the personal, the concrete, and the useful, as opposed to the impersonal, the abstract, and the ornamental. A random examination of nineteenth century textbooks on composition will give one proof that the more utilitarian methods of composition today were not unthought of.

"The power to wield thought to best advantage is the greatest power belonging to man. But it is absurd to suppose that the learning of a single system can develop sufficient ability in regard to either language or thought. Yet in most of our schools the direct study of the English language is confined almost entirely to the study of English grammar... Surely some change is necessary in regarding the art of expression -- even the form itself. The history of a language is not the skill of using it; and a boy who is worried to death in consequence of mistakes in punctuation, or carried into the upper heaven of tense, number, gender, and general morphology, without seeing how, as a whole, will probably derive little pleasure or benefit from his study, except what he may indirectly absorb from choice extracts."

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Scott, Simon, Elements of Composition and Rhetoric, Boston, Houghton, New York, 1880, p. 22.

hitherto had involved processes of imitation, rote memory, and appreciation of works of excellence. The conception began to take hold that what a pupil wrote was intrinsically more important than the skill in form and mechanics he possessed. Composition assignments began to be based more upon the actual experiences of pupils, and less upon masterpieces being studied in literature or upon selections in composition textbooks.

The influence of the Progressive Movement in education augmented the importance of the pupil as an individual. Expressionism through activities and in social situations challenged the methods of indoctrination of the traditional schools. As applied to teachers of English, the Movement tended to make them place far less emphasis on language forms, rules, and abstract principles. Progressive teachers placed first in importance, content of material written by pupils, second, organization, and third, details of punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and choice of words.¹

Educational psychologists argued for the meaningful in school instruction. They pointed out that learning is psychologically an individual matter and that it occurs most fruitfully in situations in which behavior is purposive.

Dewey, the philosopher spokesman of the Movement, expressed a view which found its counterpart in composition

¹Hosic, James Fleming, Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools, U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 2, 1917, pp. 54-57.

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methodology of progressive schools.

"...what the pupil gets directly cannot be an idea. Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think...We can and do supply ready-made 'ideas' by the thousand; we do not usually take pains to see that the one learning engages in significant situations where his own activities generate, support, and clinch ideas — that is, preceived meanings or connections..."¹

Studies were made in English composition for the purpose of determining what topics or situations were most interesting to pupils at various grade levels. By 1925, many investigators were busy with the problem. Findings reflected the common conclusions that reality is better than imagination, immediate experience is better than recalled experience, and personal topics are better than impersonal topics.²

Laidley³ reported an interesting variation from other findings in her survey of the content of at least one issue from the publications of forty six junior high schools in all parts of the country. She measured interest in terms of numbers of different types of articles to be found in the publications. Her findings are as follows in order of their importance; (1) General news (assemblies, lectures, musicales, plays, school

¹Dewey, John, Democracy and Education, Macmillan Company, New York, 1917, p. 188.

²Smith, Dora V., "The Danger of Dogma Concerning Composition Content", English Journal, Vol. XV, June, 1926, p. 416.

³Laidley, Mary Fontaine, "Composition Interests of Junior High School Pupils," English Journal, Vol. XIV, March, 1925, pp. 201-209.

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News, John, Houghton and Mifflin, Macmillan Company, New York, 1914, p. 123.

Smith, Doris V., "The Interest of Pupils in English Composition", *English Journal*, Vol. XV, June, 1926, p. 410.

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parties, honor records, contests, etc.), (2) verse, (3) jokes and personals, (4) club news, (5) stories (most were concerned with everyday life, a smaller number were concerned with the fanciful, the humorous, the personal experience, and the historical, (6) The moralities (articles dealing with honesty, etc.), and (7) informational essays. She found that description finds little favor with pupils at this age level, interest in nature and outdoor life even less, and civic interest and travel fared least in amount of space.

Laidley's findings are perhaps not as variant as they might seem to be since her technique of measurement was confined to quantity of articles appearing in school publications and is not in accord with the usual techniques of measuring compositions written in classrooms and in administering interest questionnaires.

Smith¹, in 1926, reported findings of pupil interest in composition topics for thirty junior high schools. In order of importance the topics are concerned with: Personal experience, imagination, how to do or make things, current events and community problems, school expeditions, and community enterprises.

Teachers in this same study, from grades seven, eight, and nine, were asked to list five topics they found most successful in teaching composition. The topics coincide with the listing in the previous paragraph.

¹Smith. Op. cit. pp. 414-425.

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It should be mentioned here that Smith in the same study warns against the dangers of dogmatic reliance upon results of pupil interest questionnaires in composition preference since no one type of discourse or topic is equally valued by all pupils.

Coleman¹ reported that high school pupils were most interested in writing about travel, ethics, adventure, and sports.

Eberhart² concluded that when high school pupils are given a choice of subjects, they frequently choose the following topics: Death, family relationships, getting up, dogs, games, imaginary experiences of adults, and discussions of social problems.

Landis³ concluded, from the viewpoint of organic foundations of personality, that youth in our culture want what all people in common want — recognition and status, respect and social favor, response and happy social interaction, security and group acceptance, experience and expression, achievement and success, and happiness and freedom. The writer agrees wholeheartedly with his statement that, "The problem of the school, the home, and, in fact, of all social groups, is to

¹Coleman, J. H., Written Composition Interests of Junior and Senior High School Pupils, Columbia University Teachers College Contributions to Education, No. 494, New York, 1931.

²Eberhart, Wilfred, "Humanizing the Evaluation of Written Composition", English Journal, Vol. XXIX, May, 1940, pp. 386-393.

³Landis, Paul H., Adolescence and Youth, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1945, p. 89.

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¹ Coleman, J. H., Written Composition Interests of Junior and
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Contributions to Education, No. 494, New York, 1931.

² Robertson, Wilfred, "Determining the Motivation of Written
Composition," English Journal, Vol. XXIX, May, 1940, pp. 386-
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³ Landis, Paul H., Adjustment and Youth, McGraw-Hill Book
Company, Inc., New York, 1943, p. 89.

create situations in which these basic wants of adolescents and young people find satisfaction, or else to remove them from the sphere of adult values."¹

One must think well in order to write meaningfully and successfully. Clear, sane, and impartial thinking, not to overlook the importance of critical thinking, is a goal peculiarly important to the survival of our way of life. Where best can one stimulate skills of critical thinking and accurate communication than in a course in composition? Whether recognized in theory or not, the recognition has hardly been carried into large scale practice. Evidence persists that in many school systems, more natural motivation for composition has been found in other courses than English.² The evidence suggests that this tends to be the case where compartmentalization rules out the techniques of correlation, intergration, or fusion.³

If the functional or the utilitarian viewpoint should be accepted in modern educational philosophy, and there is abundant evidence from the literature to support this assumption, and if it is the duty of the school to prepare youth to live profitably and happily now and in adult years to come, it seems entirely logical that pupils be given the opportunity to react to situations which they meet in daily life, many of which

¹Ibid.

²Seely, Op. cit.

³Billet, Roy O., Fundamentals of Secondary-School Teaching, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1940, pp. 206-207.

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¹ Ibid.

² Speer, Op. cit.

³ Elliot, Roy O., Foundamentals of Secondary-School Teaching, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1930, pp. 206-207.

situations they will meet at any age.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is proposed that the situation assignment be utilized in composition classes whenever possible (although not necessarily exclusively) rather than the older and more firmly entrenched topic form of composition assignment.

Nicholson¹, in 1939, defined the situation assignment specifically as follows:

"The situation assignment is given by presenting to the pupils the pertinent facts of an incident, a problem, a condition drawn from reality or from imagination -- in short, any set of circumstances, factual or fanciful, which may be covered by the term "situation." The manner of presentation possesses much elasticity. It may or may not be preceded by class periods devoted to the mechanics of composition, conversely, it may or may not be followed by class discussion of the scene presented, dwelling upon the ideas, or the method of developing, or both. The teacher may leave the situation uncompleted, in which case the pupil is instructed to bring it to a conclusion. Again, the situation may be offered in its entirety, and the pupil may be told to write his version of it, his acceptance or denial, approval or disapproval, possible improvements, or perhaps a recounting in the form of a news story, fiction, or editorial for the school paper. These suggestions will indicate what may be included in this method, and the possibility of variety."

Nicholson's study measured "response" in compositions written on topic and situation assignments. He concluded that situation assignments were superior in eliciting more written words and more expressed ideas than were topic assignments.

¹Nicholson, G. H., An Experimental Evaluation of the Results Obtained by Two Types of Composition Assignments, Unpublished Ed. M. Thesis, Boston University, 1934, pp. 7-8.

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Nicholson, in 1933, defined the alternation assignment

specifically as follows:

"The alternation assignment is given by presenting to the pupils the pertinent facts of an incident, a problem, a condition given freely or from imagination -- in short, any set of circumstances, factual or fanciful, which may be covered by the term 'alternation.' The manner of presentation proceeds much as follows. If any or any not be presented by class periods devoted to the mechanics of composition, conversely, it may or may not be followed by class discussion of the scene presented, dwelling upon the ideas, or the method of developing, or both. The teacher may leave the alternation unassigned. In which case the pupil is instructed to bring it to a conclusion. Again, the alternation may be offered in the exercise, and the pupil may be told to write his version of it, his acceptance or denial, approval or disapproval, possible improvement, or perhaps a rewriting in the form of a new story, fiction, or editorial for the school paper. These suggestions will indicate what may be included in this method, and the possibility of variety."

Nicholson's study measured "response" in composition written on topic and alternation assignments. He concluded that alternation assignments were superior in eliciting more written words and more expressed ideas than were topic assignments.

Nicholson, G. H., An Experimental Evaluation of the Alternation Assignment in Composition, *University of Chicago Press*, 1934, pp. 7-8.

He¹ concluded, also, that "The situation assignment stimulates and directs the imagination to a greater extent than does the topic assignment."

This study attempts to verify the findings of Nicholson and also to verify his statement:²

"When the pupil meets situations at first hand or vicariously, at present or in the future, they will not face him in the form of topics or topic sentences. Such being the case, it would seem inadequate preparation for such circumstances where writing is applicable to attempt to spur pupil composition by means of a topic."

It is further suggested that situation assignments be made optional and that the number of choices allowed by the teacher be not a few but many. The burden of presenting situation assignments need not necessarily fall upon the teacher exclusively; pupil selection should be encouraged. Fewer well-constructed, purposeful compositions are better for the inculcation of proper writing habits than many inferior "rainy day" compositions.³

The situation assignment is intended to be an antidote against the abstract, the vague, and the impersonal since every constructed assignment is based upon real or vicarious experience within the range of the particular pupils being dealt with and a specific and delimited situation is presented; a personal

¹Ibid. p. 27.

²Ibid. p. 8-9

³McGregor, A. Laura, Supervised Study in English for the Junior High School Grades, Macmillan Company, New York, 1929, p. 123.

The following, which, after the attention of the
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Restatement of Problem

In order to establish the validity of the hypotheses previously stated, the attempt must be made to measure the relative effectiveness of the two methods of presenting composition assignments. Is it a more effective teaching procedure to present the situation or the topic assignment from the point of view of number of ideas called forth by each type?

If it can be established that one or the other of the two methods is the better from a statistical analysis, the results may prove to be of value in the methodology of composition classes.

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CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH

The study of the effect of this study was conducted

1. Development of particular school curriculum

2. Development of particular experimental technique

CHAPTER III

3. Development of particular school curriculum

4. Development of particular experimental technique

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6. Development of particular experimental technique

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CHAPTER III

8. Development of particular experimental technique

9. Development of particular experimental technique

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CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

PLAN OF THE EXPERIMENT

The details of procedure in this study necessitated

1. consideration of particular school population involved;
2. consideration of particular experimental technique to be utilized;
3. selection of two approximately equal subjects (on bases of pupil interest and knowledge) to be used in the rotation technique;
4. conferences with English instructors regarding teaching and administrative procedures;
5. construction of an adequate measure of ideas;
6. construction of a questionnaire to reveal pupil preferences in regard to topic or situation assignments; and
7. use of same questionnaire to check upon assumption that pupil interest and knowledge re country and city were approximately equal.

Status of Population for the Experiment

One hundred and seventeen pupils from six tenth grade English classes in Amesbury High School, Massachusetts, participated in the experiment. The high school has four curricula: college preparatory, commercial, general, and industrial arts. Of the six classes used, one was composed mainly of college preparatory pupils, one mainly of general and commercial pupils combined, two mainly of general pupils, and two mainly of commercial pupils.

Amesbury High School probably may be described as being a consolidated school since it accepts pupils from neighboring

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Amesbury High School probably may be described as being a consolidated school since it accepts pupils from neighboring

communities; some of the pupils come from New Hampshire.

The town of Amesbury, the writer concluded from many talks with citizens, pupils, and teachers in the elementary and secondary schools, may neither be described as being urban nor rural to any significant degree of exclusiveness. According to the 1940 census, it has a population of 10,862. Its geographical location is within an imaginary triangle formed by the city of Newburyport to the south (population, 13,916), Haverhill to the west (population, 46,752), and Portsmouth, N. H., to the north (population, 14,821). Amesbury also fringes some of the small, rural towns of lower New Hampshire. Farms and factories will be found in Amesbury.

Intelligence test scores were not available for all of the pupils in the experiment; the writer, therefore, compiled each pupils's average school achievement grade and average English achievement grade for one and a half year's work in the high school. No attempt was made to equate groups on these two bases.

The sentence is stressed in the ninth grade and the paragraph is stressed in the tenth grade. Grammar and literature are studied concurrently in all of the English classes of the school. The text currently used in the tenth grade English composition work is Correct English by Tanner.¹

¹Tanner, William M., Correct English, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1938.

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The town of Andover, the writer concluded from many talks

with citizens, pupils, and teachers in the elementary and

secondary schools, may neither be described as being more nor

less rural to any significant degree of exclusiveness. According to

the 1940 census, it has a population of 10,802. Its geographical

location is within an imaginary triangle formed by the city

of Newburyport to the north (population, 13,816), Haverhill to

the west (population, 46,733), and Portsmouth, N. H., to the

east (population, 14,311). Andover also straddles some of the

small, rural towns of lower New Hampshire. Towns and locations

will be found in Andover.

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1934.

Design of Experiment

The rotation method of experimentation was used because of its tendency to reduce the difficulty of handling carry-over effects. This is a differential study of the results of two assignments in composition on the same pupils; it involves a study of the critical ratios.

The particular technique of rotation used follows. It will be observed that no pupil wrote twice under the same method nor did he write twice on the same subject. Actually, however, the assumption is that he was writing on the "same thing" since country equals city.

First Week

Third Week

Class I - (C)	Topic-Country	(B)	Situation-City
Class II - (B)	Situation-City	(C)	Topic-Country
Class III- (A)	Topic-City	(D)	Situation-Country
Class IV - (A)	Topic-City	(D)	Situation-Country
Class V - (D)	Situation-Country	(A)	Topic-City
Class VI - (D)	Situation-Country	(A)	Topic-City

The Assignments Used

The following assignments were given: A and C are of the topic type; B and D are of the situation type.

A. "Some Things I Like About the City."

B. "Mr. John Jones works on a country newspaper. This has been his work all his life. He has never become familiar with city people or with living conditions in the city. In spite of his limited knowledge of urban problems, he undertakes

the writing of a series of articles concerning the merits of living in the city. The articles, as one might expect, are not complimentary to city life or even to city people. Jones attempts to prove that America's greatness depends upon its rural population. He claims that living in the city is conducive to unhappiness, insecurity, and ill-health.

What do you think about the articles Jones wrote? Write your own opinions about the city. Choose as your audience either readers or listeners. You may prepare your speech or your article for the members of your class, for the entire student body, for a radio audience, for the editor of any newspaper or magazine, for Mr. Jones, or for any other person or group you think might be interested in your opinions of the city."

C. "Some Things I Like About the Country."

D. "Mr. John Jones works on a city newspaper. This has been his work all his life. He has never become familiar with country people or with living conditions in the country. In spite of his limited knowledge of rural problems, he undertakes the writing of a series of articles concerning the merits of living in the country. The articles, as one might expect, are not complimentary to country life or even to country people. Jones attempts to prove that America's greatness depends upon its urban population. He claims that living in the country is conducive to unhappiness, insecurity, and ill-health.

What do you think of the articles Jones wrote? Write your opinions about the country. Choose as your audience either

the writing of a series of articles concerning the merits of living in the city. The articles, as one might expect, are not complimentary to city life or even to city people. Jones attempts to prove that America's greatness depends upon the rural population. He claims that living in the city is conducive to unhappiness, ineffectivity, and ill-health.

What do you think about the articles Jones wrote? Write your own opinions about the city. Choose as your audience either readers of a magazine, or for any purpose your speech or your article for the members of your class, for the entire school body, for a radio audience, for the editor of any newspaper or magazine, for Mr. Jones, or for any other person or group you think might be interested in your opinion of the city.

C. "Some Things I Like About the Country."

D. "Mr. John Jones works on a city newspaper. This has been his work all his life. He has never become familiar with country people or with living conditions in the country. In spite of his limited knowledge of rural problems, he undertakes the writing of a series of articles concerning the merits of living in the country. The articles, as one might expect, are not complimentary to country life or even to country people. Jones attempts to prove that America's greatness depends upon its urban population. He claims that living in the country is conducive to unhappiness, ineffectivity, and ill-health.

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readers or listeners. You may prepare your speech or your article for the members of your class, for the entire student body, for a radio audience, for the editor of any newspaper or magazine, for Mr. Jones, or for any other person or group you think might be interested in your opinions of the country."

Teaching and Administrative Procedures

The three teachers in charge of the experiment balanced their instruction from the opening day (January 27th) until the closing day (February 12th). Grammar was taught in the interim between assignments. Below are the instructions to which each teacher adhered:

- "1. Each assignment should be given equal emphasis.
2. Pupils must not, under any circumstances, become aware that they are key figures in an educational experiment.
3. Every attempt must be made to duplicate the instruction for each class in the experiment--i.e., what is taught in one class must be taught in all with a maximum degree of effort toward equalizing instruction in such matters as content, method, enthusiasm, etc.
4. The method of handling assignments on days of composition writing must be uniform.
5. Do not tell the pupils how long the compositions should be. They will be curious, undoubtedly, about the number of words expected, but the instructor is requested to advise them to write the best composition they can. Conscience should be the guide.
6. The instructors are to contact me if situations arise which might jeopardize the success of the experiment."

The Idea

The basis for measurement in this experiment is the idea. The literature was searched for adequate keys leading to the measurement of ideas, but little of a concrete nature, for the

purposes of this study, could be found. Surprisingly enough, one accepted clue came, not from a recent experimental study, but from an old textbook written in the best traditions of the old school.¹

A technique, mentioned by Rinsland², to count ideas in evaluating themes was considered. It was felt, however, that to write out a "perfect" answer consisting of a number of ideas or to determine the number of ideas expected in a perfect answer would not do justice to the pupils in this particular experiment. Some pupils would undoubtedly introduce the unique. All of them are individuals who react differently to stimuli.

Nicholson's³ study which measured relative effectiveness of "response" to topic and situation assignments was considered.

It was first attempted to define an idea on two bases: ideas of things, the relationships of ideas; and complete, correct thoughts.

A specific example of the preliminary measurement follows.

"Mr. Jones had no real reason for disliking country people."

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.	<u>Ideas of things:</u>	Mr.,	Jones,	had,	no,	real,
	7.	8.	9.	reason,	for	
	disliking country, people.					

¹Brown, Goold, The First Lines of English Grammar, William Wood and Company, New York, 1884, p. 8.

²Rinsland, Henry D., Constructing Tests and Grading in Elementary and High School Subjects, Prentice-Hall Inc., New York, 1938.

³Nicholson, Op. cit., pp. 16-18.

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ideas of things, the relationships of ideas; and complete,

correct thoughts.

A specific example of the preliminary measurements follows.

"Mr. Jones had no real reason for disliking country people."

1. Idea of subject, Mr. Jones, had, no, real, reason, for disliking country people.

2. Idea of subject, Mr. Jones, had, no, real, reason, for disliking country people.

3. Idea of subject, Mr. Jones, had, no, real, reason, for disliking country people.

4. Idea of subject, Mr. Jones, had, no, real, reason, for disliking country people.

Relationships of things:

1.	2.
Mr. Jones had,	no real reason was had,
3.	
reason for disliking	country people.

2. Correctness of thought: Clear, satisfactory: 3 points.

Total: 15.

Seventy eight papers were scored using the foregoing method. It was apparent, after that amount of scoring, that relationships of things closely paralleled in proportion ideas of things. To continue using the relationships of things would have been superfluous and would have served no worthwhile purpose.

It was found, also, that scoring upon the basis of correctness of complete thought (or correctness of sentence) penalized too harshly those pupils who used complex or compound-complex sentences and favored those pupils who used short, simple sentences. The resulting scores were obviously misleading.

In order to remedy the above defect, correctness of complete thought was abandoned. This meant the elimination of certain standards concerning the sentence. The clause, rather than the sentence, was adopted as a unit of measurement. Any clause which was incoherent to two of three scorers was not given score credit, although specific ideas within the clause were counted.

The final and accepted bases of measurement were:

1. Number of specific ideas - 1 point for each
2. Number of general ideas - 1 point for each

The specific ideas are synonymous with "ideas of things" mentioned earlier; the general ideas are synonymous with coherent clauses.

Relationship of ideas: Mr. Jones had no real reason and has
reason for thinking country people.
2. Correctness of thought: Clear, satisfactory: 3 points.
Total: 15.

Seventy eight papers were scored using the foregoing method.
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The specific ideas are synonymous with "ideas of things"
mentioned earlier; the general ideas are synonymous with
coherent clauses.

For the purpose of measuring more exactly and validly in terms of ideas, quantity was obviously better than quality. Quality, by no means to minimize its more important place in writing, is a variable the measurement of which is not attempted here. If its measurement were to be attempted, recourse could have been had to standardized composition scales or to some technique involving pooled teachers' judgements.

Many mistakes in spelling and capitalization did not affect the scoring, nor did some errors in grammar since some pupils' errors do not necessarily obliterate the meaning of what they write. Errors in grammar which destroyed clear thought deprived pupils of credit for clauses.

The paragraph was not included in the scoring for reasons which have been aptly summarized by McGregor:¹

"Lessons on the structure of the paragraph... are on the whole futile. The paragraph in modern prose has no definite structure. The type paragraph taught in composition classes contains its topic sentence, developing sentences, and summarizing sentence, but one will search in vain for this traditional model in contemporary literature."

The writer believes that a fair and impartial balance has been created between penalty or award of score points. The pupil in all cases is given credit for possessing some ideas thru the counting of specific ideas; he is also given credit for possessing some coherent ideas thru the counting of general ideas. To phrase it in another way, the pupil is given credit for having ideas which can be readily understood by an impartial scorer.

¹McGregor, Op. cit., p. 121.

Directions for Administering Questionnaire

Each of the teachers adhered to the following mimeographed instructions in administering the questionnaire:

Please read the following to each class:

"In a few minutes, I am going to hand out questionnaires to you, and you will have a chance to tell what you think about the experiment in composition in which the entire class was engaged recently. You will recall that you were given a chance to write on a topic assignment and on a situation assignment either about the country or the city. It may refresh your memory if I read the exact wording of each composition assignment." (Teacher reads the specific assignments for this particular class.)

Teacher hands out questionnaires. Do this after giving the following directions:

"Read the directions carefully, and be sure that you understand exactly how to check and write on your paper. Be very careful in questions 5, 6, and 7 that you answer only one of them. If you answer question 5, you cannot answer either 6 or 7. If you answer question 6, you cannot answer either 5 or 7. If you answer question 7, you cannot answer 5 or 6.

If you find, in answering either questions 5, 6, or 7, that you do not have enough space to write as much as you wish, turn the paper over and write on the back. Be sure that you number the question.

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Teacher hands out questionnaires. Do this after giving

the following directions:

"Read the directions carefully, and be sure that you understand exactly how to check and write on your paper. Be very careful in questions 3, 6, and 7 that you answer only one of them. If you answer question 3, you cannot answer either 6 or 7. If you answer question 6, you cannot answer either 3 or 7. If you answer question 7, you cannot answer 3 or 6.

If you find, in answering either questions 3, 6, or 7, that you do not have enough space to write as much as you wish, turn the paper over and write on the back. Be sure that you

number the question.

Feel perfectly free to make any statements you wish concerning this experiment. Be as frank, as honest, as truthful as you can be. The total results obtained from all the pupils may prove to be of value in composition work. I will tell you later about the results of this experiment."

Suggestions to Teachers

1. Do not, by the slightest inflection of voice, or look, or any other mannerism, give any misleading impression that you expect one response or another.
2. Be sure that all understand exactly what to do.
3. Say nothing more than is absolutely necessary. The directions above may be all that will be necessary to say.
4. Refuse to answer any pointed questions. Do this in such a way that the pupil will realize that he must do his own thinking.
5. Give ample time for all pupils.

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4. Refuse to answer any pointed questions. Do this in such a way that the pupil will realize that he must do his own thinking.
5. Give ample time for all pupils.

Student Questionnaire on Methods of Assigning Compositions

Name:

Age(at last birthday):

Directions: In the following questions or groups of statements, check (x) those answers or statements with which you agree.

1. I found, during the writing of compositions on the country and the city, that:

I knew about the same for country and city.....
 I knew more about the city
 I knew more about the country

2. I found, during the writing of compositions on the country and the city, that:

The interest I had in both subjects was about equal....
 The country was more interesting
 The city was more interesting

3. I believe I could do my best composition work if:

The teacher chooses a subject for me
 I choose a subject myself
 The teacher gave me a choice of a few subjects.....
 The teacher gave me a choice of many subjects.....

4. I believe, after having written one composition on a topic type and one on a situation type, that:

a. I would rather write compositions from topics.....
 b. I would rather write compositions from situations...
 c. I am undecided

5. If you checked statement 4(a) above, write the best answer you can to this question: Why did you like the topic better?

6. If you checked statement 4(b) above, write the best answer you can to this question: Why did you like the situation better?

7. If you checked statement 4(c), write the best answer you can to this question: Why are you undecided?

8. Write, if you wish, any comments or opinions you may have about the value of this experiment. (Use back of sheet, if necessary.)

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CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data obtained in this experiment were analyzed for the purpose of comparing the results of the two groups.

1. The relative response in time for each class was calculated and the results are shown in a table which follows.

CHAPTER IV

2. The relative response in time for each class was calculated and the results are shown in a table which follows.

3. The relative response in time for each class was calculated and the results are shown in a table which follows.

4. The relative response in time for each class was calculated and the results are shown in a table which follows.

5. The relative response in time for each class was calculated and the results are shown in a table which follows.

6. The relative response in time for each class was calculated and the results are shown in a table which follows.

7. The relative response in time for each class was calculated and the results are shown in a table which follows.

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data obtained in this experiment were analyzed for the purpose of evaluating

1. the relative response in ideas for three classes writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment;
2. the relative response in ideas for three classes writing first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment;
3. the relative response in ideas for boys in three classes writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment;
4. the relative response in ideas for boys in three classes writing first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment;
5. the relative response in ideas for girls in three classes writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment;
6. the relative response in ideas for girls in three classes writing first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment;
7. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average school achievement grade was above 75.0 and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic

CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data obtained in both experiments were analyzed for the purpose of evaluating the relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment.

1. The relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment.

2. The relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment.

3. The relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment.

4. The relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment.

5. The relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment.

6. The relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment.

7. The relative response in these two groups of children writing first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment.

assignment;

8. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average school achievement grade was below 75.0 and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment;

9. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average school achievement grade was above 75.0 and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment;

10. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average school achievement grade was below 75.0 and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment;

11. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average English achievement grade was above 75.0 and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment;

12. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average English achievement grade was below 75.0 and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment;

13. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average English achievement grade was above 75.0 and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment; and

3. The relative response in these two groups was
average school achievement grade was below 7.0 and the
first on a relative achievement and second on a topic
achievement.

4. The relative response in these two groups was
average school achievement grade was above 7.0 and the
first on a topic achievement and second on a relative
achievement.

5. The relative response in these two groups was
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achievement.

7. The relative response in these two groups was
average school achievement grade was below 7.0 and the
first on a relative achievement and second on a topic
achievement.

8. The relative response in these two groups was
average school achievement grade was above 7.0 and the
first on a topic achievement and second on a relative
achievement.

100-100000

14. the relative response in ideas for pupils whose average English achievement grade was below 75.0 and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment.

In interpreting the critical ratios obtained for each of the preceding aspects of this study, the writer was guided by Mills.¹

"If a given difference between hypothetical and observed values would occur as a result of chance only one time out of one hundred, or less frequently, we may say that the difference is significant. This means that the results are not consistent with the hypothesis we have set up. If the discrepancy between theory and observation might occur more frequently than one time out of one hundred solely because of the play of chance, we may say the difference is not clearly significant. The results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis. The value of T (the difference between the hypothetical value and the observed mean, in units of the standard error of the mean) corresponding to a probability of $1/100$ is 2.576. One hundredth part of the area under a normal curve lies at a distance from the mean on the axis, of 2.576 standard deviations or more. Accordingly, tests of significance may be applied with direct reference to T , interpreted as a normal deviate (i.e., as a deviation from the mean of a normal distribution expressed in units of standard deviation). A value of T of 2.576 or more indicates a significant difference, while a value of less than 2.576 indicates that the results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis in question."

¹ Mills, Frederick C., Statistical Methods, (Revised), Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1938, p. 471.

14. The relative response in ideas for pupils whose average English achievement grade was below 75.0 and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment.

In interpreting the critical ratios obtained for each of the preceding aspects of this study, the writer was guided by

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"If a given difference between hypothetical and observed values would occur as a result of chance only one time out of one hundred, or less frequently, we may say that the difference is significant. This means that the results are not consistent with the hypothesis we have set up. If the discrepancy between theory and observation might occur more frequently than one time out of one hundred solely because of the play of chance, we may say the difference is not clearly significant. The results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis. The value of T (the difference between the hypothetical value and the observed mean, in units of the standard error of the mean) corresponding to a probability of 1/100 is 2.376. One hundred parts of the area under a normal curve lies at a distance from the mean on the axis, of 2.376 standard deviations or more. Accordingly, tests of significance may be applied with direct reference to T , interpreted as a normal deviate (i.e., as a deviation from the mean of a normal distribution expressed in units of standard deviation). A value of T of 2.376 or more indicates a significant difference, while a value of less than 2.376 indicates that the results are not inconsistent with the hypothesis in question."

The particular rotation technique used for the six classes is repeated for the convenience of the reader.

	<u>First Week</u>	<u>Third Week</u>
Class I	Topic-Country	Situation-City
Class II	Situation-City	Topic -Country
Class III	Topic-City	Situation-Country
Class IV	Topic-City	Situation-Country
Class V	Situation-Country	Topic-City
Class VI	Situation-Country	Topic-City

The tables which follow give critical ratios for each of the fourteen aspects listed at the beginning of the chapter. Tables IA, IB, IIA, and IIB account for the first two listed aspects of this study, i.e., for numbers 1 and 2. It will be noted that these four tables conform to the rotation technique pattern above; in order, they are I, II, III, IV, V, and VI. This technique was used in order to observe the differential effects on the same pupils in every possible writing combination.

Equivalence among classes was not attempted because of inadequacy of equating data for a sufficient number of pupils. One may note, however, that the critical ratios in the following tables give indications of the relative response in ideas of pupils compared against themselves writing on both topic and situation assignments. The tables shed light also on the subdivisions of sex, school achievement, and English achievement, in which the same pupils' responses in ideas are measured in

The particular rotation technique used for the six

classes is repeated for the convenience of the reader.

Class	First Week	Third Week
Class I	Topic-Country	Situation-City
Class II	Situation-City	Topic-Country
Class III	Topic-City	Situation-Country
Class IV	Topic-City	Situation-Country
Class V	Situation-Country	Topic-City
Class VI	Situation-Country	Topic-City

The tables which follow give critical ratios for each of

the fourteen aspects listed at the beginning of the chapter. Tables IA, IB, IIA, IIB, and IIB account for the first two listed aspects of this study, i.e., for numbers 1 and 2. It will be noted that these four tables conform to the rotation technique pattern above; in order, they are I, II, III, IV, V, and VI. This technique was used in order to observe the differential effects on the same pupils in every possible writing condition.

Equivalence among classes was not attempted because of inadequacy of existing data for a sufficient number of pupils. One may note, however, that the critical ratios in the following tables give indications of the relative response in ideas of pupils compared against themselves writing on both topic and situation assignments. The tables shed light also on the subdivisions of sex, school achievement, and English achievement, in which the same pupils' responses in ideas are recorded in

terms of situation assignment versus topic assignment.

Experimental Data

TABLE IA shows the results of writing first on Topic-Country and second on Situation-City by the pupils in Class I. The mean score for the topic assignment was 160.0 compared with 127.0 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 33.0 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of 1.46 indicates that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE IA

Class I: Topic-Country---Situation-City

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M' '1 2'	S.E. Diff.	C.R.
Topic	15	160.0	17.16	66.45	33.00	22.67	1.46
Situation	15	127.0	14.81	57.36			

TABLE IB shows the relative response from pupils in Class II who wrote first on Situation-City and second on Topic-Country. The mean score for the situation assignment was 149.94 compared with 134.92 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 15.0 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .56 indicates that this is not a significant difference.

terms of situation assignment versus topic assignment.

Experimental Data

TABLE IA shows the results of writing first on Topic-

Country and second on Situation-City by the pupils in Class I. The mean score for the topic assignment was 160.0 compared with 127.0 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 33.0 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of 1.46 indicates that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE IA

Class I: Topic-Country--Situation-City

Topic	No.	Mean	S.E.	S.D.	M - M	S.P.	C.R.
Situation	15	127.0	14.81	57.36			
Topic	15	160.0	17.16	66.43	33.00	22.67	1.46
					Diff.	1	2

TABLE IB shows the relative response from pupils in Class II who wrote first on Situation-City and second on Topic-Country. The mean score for the situation assignment was 142.66 compared with 134.83 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 7.83 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .66 indicates that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE IB

Class II: Situation-City---Topic-Country

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff.		S.E.	C.R.
					M - M 1 2			
Situation	18	149.94	16.83	74.40	15.0	27.01		.56
Topic	18	134.92	12.76	54.12				

TABLE IIA shows the relative response from pupils in Classes III and IV who wrote first on Topic-City and second on Situation-Country. The mean score for the topic assignment was 160.06 as compared with 162.85 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 2.79 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .29 indicates that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE IIA

Classes III and IV: Topic-City---Situation-Country

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff.		S.E. Diff.	C.R.
					M - M 1 2			
Topic	48	160.06	6.66	46.12	2.79	9.65		.29
Situation	48	162.85	6.98	48.33				

TABLE IIB shows the relative response from pupils in Classes V and VI who wrote first on Situation-Country and second on Topic-City. The mean score for the situation assignment was 153.74 compared with 116.64 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 37.10 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 3.20 shows this difference to be statistically significant.

TABLE IIB

Classes V and VI: Situation-Country---Topic-City

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M'		S.E.	C.R.
					1	2		
Situation	36	153.74	9.15	54.90	37.10	11.59	3.20	
Topic	36	116.64	7.12	42.72				

An analysis of the results of the questionnaire administered to these pupils at the end of the experiment revealed that eight pupils preferred writing on the situation assignments, twenty preferred the topic assignments, and eight were undecided. This would seem to indicate that the situation assignment was more stimulating to the pupils in spite of the fact that over one half of them maintained a preference for topic assignments.

TABLE III shows the relative responses from pupils in Classes V and VI who wrote first on Situation-County and second on Topic-City. The mean score for the situation assignment was 153.74 compared with 116.64 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 37.10 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 3.20 shows this difference to be statistically significant.

TABLE III
Classes V and VI: Situation-County---Topic-City

	No.	Mean	S.E.	S.E.	M - E	S.E.	Dist.
Situation	36	153.74	6.13	64.90	37.10	11.93	3.20
Topic	36	116.64	7.13	42.73			

An analysis of the results of the questionnaire administered to these pupils at the end of the experiment revealed that eight pupils preferred writing on the situation assignment, twenty preferred the topic assignment, and eight were undecided. This would seem to indicate that the situation assignment was more stimulating to the pupils in spite of the fact that over one half of them maintained a preference for topic assignments.

TABLE III shows the relative response in ideas from boys in Classes II, V, and VI who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 119.74 compared with 109.21 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 10.53 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .82 indicates that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE III

Boys in Classes II, V, and VI: Situation---Topic

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M' '1 2'		S.E.	C.R.
Situation	19	119.74	8.79	38.31	10.53	12.83		.82
Topic	19	109.21	9.35	40.75				

TABLE IV shows the relative response in ideas from boys in Classes I, III, and IV who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 138.60 compared with 131.27. The mean difference in ideas was 7.33 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of .48 indicates that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE III shows the relative responses in ideas from

boys in Classes II, V, and VI who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 112.74 compared with 104.21 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 10.53 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .82 indicated that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE III

Boys in Classes II, V, and VI: Situation--Topic

	No.	Mean	S.D.	M - M	S.E.	C.R.
Situation	19	112.74	8.79	32.31	10.53	.82
Topic	19	104.21	8.78			

TABLE IV shows the relative responses in ideas from boys

in Classes I, III, and IV who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 132.60 compared with 131.27. The mean difference in ideas was 7.33 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of .48 indicated that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE IV

Boys in Classes I, III, and IV: Topic---Situation

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. M - M		S.E.	C.R.
					1	2		
Topic	22	138.60	10.56	49.53	7.33	15.26		.48
Situation	22	131.27	10.98	51.50				

TABLE V shows the relative response in ideas from girls in Classes II, V, and VI, who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 169.14 compared with 134.29 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 34.85. The critical ratio of 2.68 indicates that this difference is significant.

TABLE V

Girls in Classes II, V, and VI: Situation---Topic

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. M - M		S.E.	C.R.
					1	2		
Situation	35	169.14	9.60	56.80	34.85	13.02		2.68
Topic	35	134.29	8.79	52.00				

An analysis of the returns from the girls in these three classes reveals that ten of them preferred writing on the situations, seventeen preferred writing on the topics, and eight were undecided. In spite of their expressed preferences, it must be assumed that, for them at least, the situation assignment proved more stimulating.

TABLE VI shows the relative response from girls in Classes I, III, and IV, who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 171.40 compared with 166.40 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 5.0 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of .44 indicates that this difference is not significant.

TABLE VI

Girls in Classes I, III, and IV: Topic---Situation

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M'		S.E.	C.R.
					1	2		
Topic	41	171.40	7.74	49.56	5.00	11.49		.44
Situation	41	166.40	7.88	50.47				

An analysis of the returns from the girls in these three classes reveals that ten of them preferred writing on the situations, seventeen preferred writing on the topics, and eight were undecided. In spite of their expressed preferences, it must be assumed that, for them at least, the situation assignment proved more stimulating.

TABLE VI shows the relative responses from girls in Classes I, III, and IV, who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 171.40 compared with 166.40 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in these was 5.0 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of .44 indicates that this difference is not significant.

TABLE VI
Girls in Classes I, III, and IV: Topic--Situation

	No.	Mean	S.D.	T	D.F.	C.R.
Topic	41	171.40	7.76	48.66	3.03	11.43
Situation	41	166.40	7.68	50.47		

TABLE VII shows the relative response in ideas from the pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose average school achievement was above 75.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 187.88 compared with 135.31 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 52.57. The critical ratio of 3.19 indicates that this is a significant difference.

TABLE VII

Pupils of High School-Achievement: Situation---Topic

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M' '1 2'	S.E.	C.R.
'Situation	26	187.88	12.05	61.42	52.57	16.50	3.19
Topic	26	135.31	11.27	57.45			

An analysis of the questionnaire returns from the pupils in these three classes revealed that eleven pupils preferred writing on situation assignments, seven preferred writing on topic assignments, and eight were undecided. The writer believes that these results have a significance since, for the first time in the experiment, there is a majority preference for the situation assignment. In most cases, it was discovered that pupils indicated that they preferred topic assignments, but did slightly or significantly better on situation assignments.

TABLE VII shows the relative response in ideas from the

pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose average school achievement was above 75.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 137.55 compared with 133.31 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 4.24. The critical ratio of 2.15 indicates that this is a significant difference.

TABLE VII

Pupils of High School Achievement: Situation--Topic

	No.	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	D.F.	C.R.
Situation	26	137.55	12.03	2.37	50	2.15
Topic	26	133.31	11.27	2.24	50	

An analysis of the questionnaire returns from the pupils in these three classes revealed that eleven pupils preferred writing on situation assignments, seven preferred writing on topic assignments, and eight were undecided. The writer believes that these results have a significant value for the first time in the experiment, there is a majority preference for the situation assignment. In most cases, it was discovered that pupils indicated that they preferred topic assignments, but did slightly or significantly better on situation assignments.

TABLE VIII shows the relative response from pupils in Classes I, III, and IV, whose average school achievement was above 75.0, and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 158.75 compared with 167.00 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 8.25. The critical ratio of .72 reveals that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE VIII

Pupils of High School-Achievement: Topic---Situation

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M'		S.E.	C.R.
					1	2		
Topic	40	158.75	7.93	50.14	8.25	11.48		.72
Situation	40	167.00	8.30	52.52				

TABLE IX shows the relative response in ideas from pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose school achievement was below 75.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 119.61 compared with 118.63 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was .98 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .10 reveals that this difference is insignificant.

TABLE VIII shows the relative responses from pupils in Classes I, III, and IV, whose average school achievement was above 75.0, and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 128.75 compared with 127.00 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 8.25. The critical ratio of .72 reveals that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE VIII
Pupils of High School Achievement: Topic--Situation

Topic	Situation	No.	Mean	S.D.	T	D.F.	C.R.
40	40	128.75	7.25	30.14	8.25	11.48	.72

TABLE IX shows the relative responses in ideas from pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose school achievement was below 75.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 129.64 compared with 128.44 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was .38 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .10 reveals that this difference is insignificant.

TABLE IX

Pupils of Low School-Achievement: Situation---Topic

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M' '1 2'	S.E.	C.R.
Situation	28	119.61	7.50	39.66	.98	10.19	.10
Topic	28	118.63	6.90	36.71			

TABLE X shows the relative response in ideas from pupils in Classes I, III, and IV, whose school achievement was below 75.0, and who wrote first on the topic assignment and second on the situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 158.95 compared with 132.74 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 26.21 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of 1.72 reveals this difference to be insignificant.

TABLE X

Pupils of Low School-Achievement: Topic---Situation

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M' '1 2'	S.E.	C.R.
Topic	23	158.95	11.09	56.86	26.21	15.23	1.72
Situation	23	132.74	10.44	50.08			

TABLE XI shows the relative response in ideas from pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose average English achievement grade was above 75.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 197.90 compared with 146.0 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 51.90 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 3.24 reveals this difference to be significant.

TABLE XI

Pupils of High English Achievement: Situation---Topic

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M'		S.E.	C.R.
					1	2		
Situation	20	197.90	11.66	52.13	51.90		15.99	3.24
Topic	20	146.00	10.94	48.95				

An analysis of the questionnaire returns from these pupils revealed that seven preferred topic assignments, six preferred situation assignments, and seven were undecided. This was considered to be somewhat significant to the writer (as in the case of high achievement pupils mentioned earlier) since the discrepancy between preferences was slight. The results indicate that pupils whose average English achievement is high tend toward preferring situation assignments, and actually are more stimulated by the situation assignments.

TABLE XI shows the relative responses in ideas from

pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose average English achievement grade was above 85.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 187.50 compared with 146.5 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 41.00 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 3.24 reveals this difference to be significant.

TABLE XI

Pupils of High English Achievement: Situation--Topic

	Mean	S.D.	N	S.E.	C.R.
Situation	187.50	11.50	21	2.43	3.24
Topic	146.50	10.90	21	2.34	

An analysis of the questionnaire returns from these pupils revealed that seven preferred topic assignments, six preferred situation assignments, and seven were undecided. This was considered to be somewhat significant to the writer (as in the case of high achievement pupils mentioned earlier) since the discrepancy between preferences was slight. The results indicate that pupils whose average English achievement is high tend toward preferring situation assignments, and actually are more stimulated by the situation assignments.

TABLE XII shows the relative response in ideas from the pupils in Classes I, III, and IV, whose average English achievement grade was above 75.0, and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 160.81 compared with 167.42 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 6.61 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .59 reveals that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE XII

Pupils of High English Achievement: Topic---Situation

	No.	Mean	S.E. M.	S.D.	Diff. 'M - M'		S.E.	C.R.
					1	2		
Topic	38	160.81	7.28	44.86	6.61	11.19		.59
Situation	38	167.42	8.50	52.38				

TABLE XIII shows the relative response in ideas from pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose average English achievement grade was below 75.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 125.30 compared with 112.79 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 12.51 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 1.08 reveals this difference to be insignificant.

TABLE XII shows the relative response in ideas from two pupils in Classes I, III, and IV, whose average English achievement grade was above 75.0, and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 150.81 compared with 147.42 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 3.39 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of .38 reveals that this is not a significant difference.

TABLE XII

Pupils of High English Achievement: Topic--Situations

	No.	Mean	S.D.	M - M	S.E.	C.R.
Topic	38	150.81	7.78	150.81	3.39	.38
Situation	38	147.42	8.60	147.42	3.39	

TABLE XIII shows the relative response in ideas from pupils in Classes II, V, and VI, whose average English achievement grade was below 75.0, and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment. The mean score for the situation assignment was 147.50 compared with 142.79 for the topic assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 4.71 in favor of the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 1.08 reveals this difference to be insignificant.

TABLE XIII

Pupils of Low English Achievement: Situation---Topic

	No.	Mean	S.E.	S.D.	Diff.		S.E.	C.R.
					M - M			
					1	2		
Situation	34	125.30	8.27	48.24	12.51		11.59	1.08
Topic	34	112.79	8.12	47.38				

TABLE XIV shows the relative response in ideas from the pupils in Classes I, III, and IV, whose English achievement was below 75.0, and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a situation assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 158.80 compared with 131.80 for the situation assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 27.00 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of 1.74 reveals this difference to be insignificant.

TABLE XIV

Pupils of Low English Achievement: Topic---Situation

	No.	Mean	S.E.	S.D.	Diff.		S.E.	C.R.
					M - M			
					1	2		
Topic	25	158.80	12.19	60.94	27.00		15.51	1.74
Situation	25	131.80	9.59	47.94				

TABLE XIII

Profile of Low English Achievement: Station--Topic

	No.	Mean	S.E.	S.D.	M - S	S.E.	S.D.		
Station	34	120.50	8.27	48.24	12.61	11.60	1.98		
Topic	34	112.79	8.12	47.38					

Table XIV shows the relative responses in ideas from the pupils in Classes I, III, and IV, whose English achievement was below 75.0, and who wrote first on a topic assignment and second on a station assignment. The mean score for the topic assignment was 120.50 compared with 121.00 for the station assignment. The mean difference in ideas was 0.50 in favor of the topic assignment. The critical ratio of 1.94 reveals this difference to be insignificant.

TABLE XIV

Profile of Low English Achievement: Topic--Station

	No.	Mean	S.E.	S.D.	M - S	S.E.	S.D.		
Topic	34	120.50	8.27	48.24	12.61	11.60	1.98		
Station	34	121.00	8.28	47.94					

Results of Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire were as follows:

1. a. Fifty five pupils held that they knew more about the country than about the city.

2. b. Fifty one pupils indicated that they knew more about the city than about the country.

c. Thirteen pupils were undecided.

2. a. Fifty nine pupils held that they were more interested in the country than in the city.

b. Fifty four pupils indicated that they were more interested in the city than in the country.

c. Four pupils were undecided.

3. a. Sixty three pupils preferred the topic assignment.

b. Twenty four pupils preferred the situation assignment.

c. Thirty pupils were undecided.

4. a. Five pupils held that they could do their best composition work if the teacher chose a subject for them.

b. Forty seven pupils believed that they could do their best composition work if they chose their own subjects.

c. Twenty two pupils indicated that they could do their best composition work if the teacher gave them a choice of a few subjects.

d. Forty five pupils thought that they could do their best composition work if the teacher gave them a choice

Results of Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire were as follows:

1. a. Fifty-five pupils said that they knew more about the country than about the city.
b. Fifty-one pupils indicated that they knew more about the city than about the country.
c. Thirteen pupils were undecided.
2. a. Fifty-nine pupils said that they were more interested in the country than in the city.
b. Fifty-four pupils indicated that they were more interested in the city than in the country.
c. Four pupils were undecided.
3. a. Sixty-three pupils preferred the topic assigned.
b. Twenty-four pupils preferred the alternative assignment.
c. Thirty pupils were undecided.
4. a. Five pupils said that they could do their best composition work if the teacher chose a subject for them.
b. Forty-seven pupils believed that they could do their best composition work if they chose their own subjects.
c. Twenty-two pupils indicated that they could do their best composition work if the teacher gave them a choice of a few subjects.
5. Forty-five pupils thought that they could do their best composition work if the teacher gave them a choice

of many subjects.

Some of the typical opinions in favor of the topic assignment follow:

1. "It gives a chance for more originality since it does not confine your thoughts quite as much. There is a larger field of ideas to choose from also."

2. "I would rather write compositions from topics because I think it gives you a better chance to express original ideas, where if you are given a situation many of the ideas are given to you."

3. "I like to write from topics because the topic gives you a definite thing to write about."

4. "I liked the topic better because it gives you something more definite to base your whole composition on. With a situation you let your mind wander before you start writing."

Some typical opinions in favor of the situation were:

1. "I prefer the situation type because one can obtain more ideas on just what is expected of him. It helps you to obtain a better view on just what you are to write about."

2. "I would rather write compositions on situations because they make you think more. Especially if you disagree with the reasons the person gives."

3. "It gives an idea of what we were to write on. The situations helped to explain the composition and made it easier."

4. "I like the situation better because you have a better and firmer basis to work on."

V. O. X. O. CO.

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1. The first of these is the fact that the
2. The second is the fact that the
3. The third is the fact that the
4. The fourth is the fact that the
5. The fifth is the fact that the
6. The sixth is the fact that the
7. The seventh is the fact that the
8. The eighth is the fact that the
9. The ninth is the fact that the
10. The tenth is the fact that the

5. "I like the situation better because when I am writing about a situation the words and ideas seem to come to me much easier."

2. "I like the situation better because when I am
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CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of two methods of assigning English compositions; it was to test the quantity of ideas produced by topic and situation assignments.

Two topic assignments and two situation assignments were devised and given to one hundred and seventeen pupils in the tenth grade. Each pupil wrote on one situation assignment and on one topic assignment. The three instructors, who took charge of the six classes in this study, balanced their instruction prior to and during the experiment. One week separated the writing of the two compositions. The assignments were based upon two subjects assumed to be as inherently alike as possible for the particular pupil population involved.

The rotation technique of experimentation was adopted because of the limitation of equating data for a suitable number of pupils. In the technique which was followed, each pupil was measured, or was competing, against himself.

A questionnaire was administered to the pupils one day after the completion of the written composition assignments. It was designed to reveal preferences for either type of assignment and to check upon the assumption that most of the pupils would have approximate interest in and knowledge of the country and the city.

CHAPTER V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of two methods of assigning English compositions; it was to test the quality of ideas produced by pupils and the quality of the assignments.

Two topic assignments and two situation assignments were devised and given to one hundred and seventeen pupils in the tenth grade. Each pupil wrote one situation assignment and one topic assignment. The three instructors, who took charge of the six classes in this study, balanced their instruction prior to and during the experiment. One week after the writing of the two compositions, the assignments were based upon two subjects assumed to be as inherently alike as possible for the particular pupil population involved.

The position technique of extrapolation was adopted because of the limitation of existing data for a reliable number of pupils. In the technique which was followed, each pupil was measured, or was compared, against himself.

A questionnaire was administered to the pupils one day after the completion of the written composition assignments. It was designed to reveal preferences for either type of assignment and to check upon the assumption that most of the pupils would have approximate interest in and knowledge of the country and the city.

Findings

1. It was found, in eleven of the sixteen aspects of this study, that the mean response for pupils writing on a situation assignment was higher than the mean response for those writing on a topic assignment. There were, in four of these eleven aspects, significant differences between the means of the two types in favor of the situation.

2. No significant differences between means were found to favor the topic assignment.

3. Pupils in Classes V and VI who wrote first on Situation-Country and second on Topic-City did significantly better on the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 3.20 shows that their performance was better on the situation assignment in spite of their preference for the topic assignment.

4. Girls in Classes II, V, and VI who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment did significantly better on the situation assignment. The critical ratio was 2.68. The girls, in these classes, preferred the topic type of assignment seventeen to ten, but they were more stimulated to respond in quantity of ideas to the situation assignment.

5. Pupils in Classes II, V, and VI who had an average school achievement grade of 75.0 or better and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment did significantly better on the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 3.19 became, in the opinion of the writer, more significant after an analysis of questionnaire returns. There was

Findings

1. It was found, in eleven of the sixteen aspects of this study, that the mean response for pupils writing on a situation assignment was higher than the mean response for those writing on a topic assignment. There were, in four of these eleven aspects, significant differences between the means of the two types in favor of the situation.

2. No significant differences between mean scores were found to favor the topic assignment.

3. Pupils in Classes V and VI who wrote first on a situation-Content and second on Topic-Only did significantly better on the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 2.50 shows that their performance was better on the situation assignment in spite of their preference for the topic assignment.

4. Girls in Classes II, V, and VI who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment did significantly better on the situation assignment. The critical ratio was 2.58. The girls, in these classes, preferred the topic type of assignment situation to topic, but they were more inclined to respond in quality of ideas to the situation assignment.

5. Pupils in Classes II, V, and VI who had an average school achievement grade of 75.0 or better and who wrote first on a situation assignment and second on a topic assignment did significantly better on the situation assignment. The critical ratio of 2.50 shows, in the opinion of the writer, some slight improvement in quality of questionnaires returned. There was

revealed, for the first time in the study, a majority preference for the situation assignment. Eleven pupils indicated a preference for the situation assignment and seven for the topic assignment.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are justified in the light of the data presented:

1. Greater differences were shown by girls in their reactions to both types of assignments in favor of the situation assignment than were shown by boys.

2. Greater differences were shown by pupils of high school-achievement in their reactions to both types of assignments in favor of the situation assignment than were shown by pupils of low school achievement.

3. Greater differences were shown by pupils of high English achievement in their reactions to both types of assignments in favor of the situation assignment than were shown by pupils of low English achievement.

4. The situation assignment proved itself to be superior to the topic assignment, for a majority of the pupils measured against themselves, in drawing forth a greater response in ideas.

5. Pupils of high school-achievement and high English achievement tended to prefer writing on situation assignments.

revealed, for the first time in the study, a majority preference for the situation assignment. Eleven pupils indicated a preference for the situation assignment and seven for the topic assignment.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are justified in the light of the data presented:

1. Greater differences were shown by girls in their reactions to both types of assignments in favor of the situation assignment than were shown by boys.
2. Greater differences were shown by pupils of high school achievement in their reactions to both types of assignments in favor of the situation assignment than were shown by pupils of low school achievement.
3. Greater differences were shown by pupils of high English achievement in their reactions to both types of assignments in favor of the situation assignment than were shown by pupils of low English achievement.
4. The situation assignment proved itself to be superior to the topic assignment, for a majority of the pupils reacted against themselves, in drawing forth a greater response in ideas.
5. Pupils of high school-achievement and high English achievement tended to prefer writing on situation assignments.

Implications for Teaching Procedures

1. The situation assignment can be used effectively by the teacher of composition to insure that the majority of her pupils are adequately stimulated to respond in ideas.

2. The teacher of composition, being assured that her pupils are responding adequately in quantity of ideas, may then focus their attention upon the more important matter of quality of ideas.

3. It might be advisable, in certain instances, for the teacher of composition to introduce the situation assignment as herein defined. The results of the questionnaire, administered in this study, tend to show that the majority of of pupils do not see readily the implications of this type of assignment.

Limitations of Study

1. Groups were not equated because of a lack of suitable equating data for a sufficient number of pupils. The rotation technique, which was used specifically to offset this limitation, was effective in getting a measure of a pupil against himself or of a class against itself. The resulting conclusions of this study, however, are based upon the writing performances of a smaller number of pupils than the writer desired.

2. The lack of two additional classes impeded the establishment of a perfectly rounded out rotation technique.

Procedures for Teaching Composition

1. The first assignment can be made relatively by the teacher of composition to insure that the majority of the pupils are adequately stimulated to respond to ideas.
2. The teacher of composition, being assured that the pupils are responding adequately in quantity of ideas, may then focus their attention upon the more important matter of quality of ideas.
3. It might be desirable, in certain instances, for the teacher of composition to introduce the attention assignment as he/she desired. The results of the questionnaire, administered in this study, tend to show that the majority of pupils do not see readily the implications of this type of assignment.

Limitations of Study

1. Pupils were not selected because of a lack of motivation and ability for a sufficient number of pupils. The question technique, which was used specifically to elicit the results, is not alive in getting a response of a pupil against himself or of a class against itself. The resulting conclusions of this study, however, are based upon the writing performance of a smaller number of pupils than the entire class.
2. The lack of two additional classes impeded the establishment of a perfectly rounded out research technique.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. It may prove of value, in further studies of the effectiveness of situation assignments, to note the correlation, between tests of critical thinking and measures of relative performance in writing on topic and situation assignments.

2. It may prove of value to note the effects of utilizing the situation assignment upon pupils' habits of study.

3. It may prove of value to note the effects of continued utilization of situation assignments on progress in grammar.

Questions for Further Research

1. It may prove of value, in further studies of the effectiveness of attention assignments, to note the correlation between tests of critical thinking and measures of relative performance in writing on topic and attention assignments.
2. It may prove of value to note the effects of utilizing the attention assignment upon pupils' habits of study.
3. It may prove of value to note the effects of continued utilization of attention assignments on progress in

classroom.

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